

Honoring God and Country

Independence Day 1993

I. BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD.

II. THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

A. *The Laws of Nature and of Nature's God*

1. Discovered in two ways:
 - a. From the physical laws of the creation
 - b. From the revealed laws in Scripture.
2. Blackstone: "Upon these two foundations, the law of Nature and the law of Revelation, depend all human law; that is to say, no human laws should be suffered to contradict these."
3. **John Whitehead on Types of Laws**

The first type of law is the *fundamental law* upon which the culture and society are established. This fundamental law may be equated with the "higher law," which should be "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." The higher law is clearly expressed in God's revelation as ultimately found in the Bible. In this the higher law has its sustenance.

The second type of law, *constitutional law*, provides the form of civil government to protect the God-given rights of the people. The people can base their institutions upon constitutional law, in conjunction with the higher or fundamental law. Although the Constitution is undergirded by an absolute value system, it is not a source of ultimate values.

The bottom line is that man's law must have its origin in God's revelation. Any law that contradicts biblical revelation is illegitimate. Illegitimate law, as the colonists protested to King George, was "of none effect." After all, it is the Creator who endows man with rights, which the law is to protect. Succinctly put, there is a law, a system of absolutes, derived from biblical principles that transcends man and his institutions. It existed before man and will exist after him.

B. *We hold these truths to be self-evident*

1. that all men are created equal..."
2. that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights
Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness

A. *"...with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence..."*

III. The Christian Heritage of our Forefathers

A. ***Christopher Columbus***

1. It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel his hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because he comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures...

I am a most unworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely. I have found the sweetest consolation since I made it my whole purpose to enjoy His marvelous presence. For the execution of the journey to the Indies, I did not make use of intelligence, mathematics or maps. It is simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied...

No one should fear to undertake any task in the name of our Saviour, if it is just and if the intention is purely for His holy service. The working out of all things has been assigned to each person by our Lord, but it all happens according to his sovereign will, even though he gives advice. He lacks nothing that it is in the power of men to give Him. Oh, what a gracious Lord, who desires that people should perform for Him those things for which He holds Himself responsible! Day and night, moment by moment, everyone should express their most devoted gratitude to Him.

2. **Columbus' prayer when he landed on San Salvador (Holy Saviour)**

"O Lord, Almighty and everlasting God, by Thy holy Word Thou hast created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea; blessed and glorified by Thy Name, and praised by Thy Majesty, which hath deigned to use us, Thy humble servants, that Thy holy Name may be proclaimed in this second part of the earth."

B. ***Benjamin Franklin***

1. Did Benjamin Franklin believe prayer to be a practical and profitable use of one's time? In short, did he believe in a God who hears and answers our prayers? In answer to this question, I direct your attention to a climactic session of debate at the Constitutional Convention on Thursday, June 28, 1787.
2. The debate on the floor over representation and voting had reached a hopeless deadlock, and tempers were heating up. Some of the New York delegation had already left, and others were on the verge of following suit. At this dismal and unpromising point of debate, the eight-one-year-old philosopher, scientist, and statesman rose to address the president (George Washington) and delegates. As recorded by the convention's secretary, James Madison, here is what Franklin said:

Mr. President:

The small progress we have made after four or five weeks close attendance and continual reasonings with each other--our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ayes, is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding. We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed modern states all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In this situation of this Assembly, grouping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding! In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind providence, we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth--*that God governs in the affairs of men*. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better, than the builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and by word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move--that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service (Pp. 123-124, Faith of Our Founding Fathers, Tim Lahaye).

C. *George Washington and Prayer*

Morning prayer

Almighty God, and most merciful father, who didst command the children of Israel to offer a daily sacrifice to Thee, that thereby they might glorify and praise Thee for Thy protection both night and day; receive, O Lord, my morning sacrifice which I now offer up to Thee...I beseech Thee, my sins, remove them from Thy presence, as far as the east is from the west, and accept of me for the merits of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, that when I come into thy temple, and compass Thine altar, my prayers may come before Thee as incense; and as Thou wouldst hear me calling upon Thee in my prayers, so give me grace to hear Thee calling on me in thy word, that it may be wisdom, righteousness, reconciliation and peace to the saving of my soul in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Evening Prayer

O most Glorious God, in Jesus Christ my merciful and loving Father, I acknowledge and confess my guilt, in the weak and imperfect performance of the duties of this day. I have called on Thee for pardon and forgiveness of sins....Let me live according to those holy rules which Thou hast this day prescribed in Thy holy word; make me to know what is acceptable in Thy sight, and therein to delight, open the eyes of my understanding, and help me thoroughly to examine my self concerning my knowledge, faith and repentance, increase my faith, and direct me to the true object, Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life, bless, O Lord, all the people of this land, from the highest to the lowest, particularly those whom Thou hast appointed to rule over us in church and state. Continue Thy goodness to me this night. These weak petitions, I humbly implore Thee to hear, accept and answer for the sake of Thy Dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

A. *George Washington's reference to God's Providence in his life and the life of the nation*

"By the miraculous care of Providence, that protected me beyond all human expectations; I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, and yet escaped unhurt."

"It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

B. *The Hand of God Rescues George Washington's Army*

God's Providence played a great part in rescuing General Washington's troops when they were penned up in Brooklyn Heights by General Howe in the early days of the Revolution. Despite the heavy losses general Howe had inflicted on Washington's army, he had not succeeded in capturing or destroying it. Now he prepared to lay siege to the American forces on Long Island: some 8,000 men on Brooklyn Heights. Washington realized he must retreat. But how? The English forces surrounded him in a great encircle and behind him British ships could close him off at any time. Then began Washington's desperate, bold strategy. He collected every vessel he could find from row boats to sloops and, manned by fishermen from Gloucester and Marblehead, he set about to evacuate his troops by night. A desperate measure, surely, and one doomed to failure. For would not the British see them in the moonlight or hear the splashing of their oars and the many sounds of 8,000 men being transported, however quiet they tried to be!? But, as historian John Fiske writes: "The Americans had been remarkably favored by the sudden rise of a fog which covered the East River..."

In the morning, the British discovered to their astonishment that their enemies had vanished--even taking with them their provisions, horses, and cannons! Fiske maintains that "So rare a chance of ending the war at a blow was never again to be offered to the British commanders." But, at the crucial, desperate moment, when Washington

had done all he could do, the Hand of God intervened, providing the critically-needed elements so that neither by sight nor by sound were the army's whereabouts known to the enemy.

Were all these events "happy accidents" or mere "good luck"? When these and hundreds more striking instances of the providential hand of God in our history are put side by side, a pattern emerges that shows God's repeated protection of the new nation whose settlers had founded it for His glory.

IV. REFERENCES TO GOD IN OUR NATION

A. *Supreme Court - 1892*

"In 1892 the United States Supreme Court made an exhaustive study of the supposed connection between Christianity and the government of the United States. After researching hundreds of volumes of historical documents, the Court asserted these references add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a religious people...a Christian nation.' Likewise in 1931, Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland reviewed the 1892 decision in relation to another case and reiterated that Americans are a 'Christian people' and in 1952 Justice William O. Douglas affirmed 'we are a religious people and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.'"

B. *The National Anthem*

O! thus be it ever when free men shall stand
 Between their loved home and the war's desolation;
 Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
 Praise the Pow're that hath made and preserved us a nation!
 Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just;
 And this be our motto, "In God is our trust!"
 And the star spangled banner in triumph shall wave
 O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

C. *America the Beautiful*

God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.

Music, particularly that of a patriotic nature, usually gives insight into the religious beliefs of a nation. Our country heralds several nationally loved patriotic songs.

D. *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* - "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord"

E. *God Bless America*

CHRISTIAN NATION IN APOSTASY

It must be admitted that today, although we are still essentially a Christian nation in form (i.e., the Constitution, legal structure, church affiliation), we are not one in conduct. For the first 250 years of our existence Christian character determined the conduct of self-government in homes, churches, and civil society. But today we have forgotten our heritage and only the skeleton remains. Even so, deep within the American character there lingers a Christian conscience ready to be revived by the spirit of God through awakened American Christian patriots.

God blessed America because our forefathers built their nation with reliance on Him and His Word, and because God had a Gospel purpose for our nation. If we turn from His purpose we can expect His judgment, perhaps greater judgment than other nations because "to whom much is given, much is required."

Every nation can be a nation under God if it chooses to follow Jesus Christ. Our history is unique in that we were allowed to express the full flower of Christian civilization and government. This fact should give us cause to ponder the price we have paid for the maintenance of our Christian liberty. Will we be the generation that presides over its death?

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR NATION

Pray for it.

Love and support it.

Become involved.